

Mari Yamazaki

Thermae Romae [ローマの温泉] (Series)

Japan (2009)

TAGS: [Antoninus Pius](#) [Hadrian](#) [Roman Empire](#) [Roman History](#) [Rome](#)



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General information	
<i>Title of the work</i>	Thermae Romae [ローマの温泉] (Series)
<i>Country of the First Edition</i>	Japan
<i>Country/countries of popularity</i>	Japan
<i>Original Language</i>	Japanese
<i>First Edition Date</i>	2009
<i>First Edition Details</i>	Mari Yamazaki, <i>Thermae Romae</i> (volume 1). Tokyo: Enterbrain, 2009, 138 pp. Volume 1, 2009-volume 6, 2013: ローマの温泉 1, 2009 ローマの温泉 2, 2010 ローマの温泉 3, 2011 ローマの温泉 4, 2012 ローマの温泉 5, 2012 ローマの温泉 6, 2013
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<i>Awards</i>	The third Manga Prize; 2010: the Short Story Award at the 14th Tezuka Osamu Cultural Prize in 2010.
<i>Genre</i>	Alternative histories (Fiction), Comics (Graphic works), Historical fiction, Humor, Time-Slip Fantasy*
<i>Target Audience</i>	Crossover

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Creators



Mari Yamazaki , b. 1967 (Author)

Mari Yamazaki is a Japanese manga artist. Born in Tokyo in 1967, at the age of 17, she moved to Italy to study in art history and painting in the Academy of Fine Arts of Florence for 11 years. During her stay in Florence, Yamazaki began to write and paint life overseas on her blog. This was the starting point of her manga career. Afterwards, she came to live in Damascus, north Italy, and Lisbon, and now lives in Chicago with her Italian husband. Her overseas experiences, especially her Italian days, influence her work. Apart from the award-winning series *Thermae Romae* (2008-2013), her works also include *Rage! Italian Family* (2006), *Sweet Home Chicago* (2011), and *Jakomo Fusukari* (2011).

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Additional information

Adaptations

Thermae Romae, TV anime, six chapters, Dir: Tani Azuma, Tokyo: Fuji Television Network Inc., 2012 English subtitles: Eastern Star in North America (2013) & Siren Visual in Australia (2012).

Thermae Romae, live-action film, Dir: Takeuchi Hideki, Tokyo: Toho Co. Ltd., 2012.

Thermae Romae II, live-action film, Dir: Takeuchi Hideki, Tokyo: Toho Co. Ltd., 2014.

Translation

English: *Thermae Romae*. New York: Yen Press, 2012–2014.

Chinese (traditional): 熱泉物語. Taipei: Kadokawa Taiwan Corporation, 2010–2014.

French: *Thermae Romae*. Bruxelles: Sakka, 2012–2013.

Italian: *Thermae Romae*. Perugia: Star Comics, 2011–2014.

Summary

Lucius, a second-century Roman architect who specializes in designing public bathhouses, is experiencing a career crisis. His old-fashioned style of bathhouses is no longer suitable to Rome's craze for novelty. During a bath in a public bathhouse, he is accidentally transferred to a bathhouse in 21-century Japan through a mysterious process in the water. Astonished by the advanced innovations and gadgets found there, Lucius brings the new ideas of contemporary Japanese bathhouses back to ancient Rome to save his career. Periodically transferring between contemporary Japan and ancient Rome, Lucius brings architectural ideas and inspiration for artifacts from the future to his present, and hence becomes a celebrated bathhouse architect, gets rewarded by Hadrian, the emperor, and brings modern convenience and comfort to the citizens of ancient Rome. In the latter part of the series, Lucius spends a relatively extended period in Ito, Japan, where he meets Satsuki—a 28-year-old Japanese female lecturer on archaeology obsessed with the culture and history of ancient Roman Empire. Communicating with Lucius in Latin, Satsuki develops a romantic relationship with him. She determines to

transfer back to Lucius' ancient world and live there forever with him.

Apart from the time-travel adventure of Lucius, a historical subplot surrounding the succession of Hadrian the emperor also plays a significant part in the story. Historical figures such as Lucius Ceionius Commodus, Antoninus Pius, and Marcus Aurelius come to stage and befriend the protagonist; his bath-house building is thus granted with the significance of changing the history and bringing peace and happiness to the people of Roman Empire. Yamazaki uses bath-house culture as an overarching theme to connect two worlds—modern Japan and ancient Rome separated by time and geography and displays the similarities and the communal pursuit of happiness and peace in both cultures. The vivid yet intricate illustrations based on detailed research reconstruct a visually authentic ancient Rome on the page; the series was adapted both to animation and live-action films.

Analysis

Thermae Romae is one of many comedy fantasy texts using time-travel as its core plot. The primary thematic implication of this work is the assertion and advocacy of cross-culture communication. The witty, sometimes hilarious plots make it highly attractive for readers; it is also informative and intellectual. After each chapter, there is an author's note in which Yamazaki explains the cultural references or the creation process of the chapter. On one level, readers could identify with Lucius to perceive modern Japan's culture through his eyes, on the other level, they could perceive and reflect on the history, mythology, arts and everyday life of ancient Rome throughout the reading. In chapter ten, because of the popularity of Lucius's Japan-inspired innovative design, many old-fashioned Rome bathhouses are experiencing difficulties to survive. Lucius feels guilty and is trying to help. During his another time-travel trip to Japan, he finds out there are also timeworn bathhouses struggling to survive. The idea of the commemorative stamp collection helps these old bathhouses to attract new tourists, in that each bathhouse has a local deity as its icon, by collecting all the icons of deities in the stamp collection book, the winner could get some souvenirs as rewards. Lucius borrows this idea and brings it back to Rome since both Ancient Roman religion and Japanese Shinto belief are polytheistic. Gods such as Venus, Apollo, and Bacchus are assigned to different bathhouses, with the result that people are pouring in to collect deity stamps. The method is fun yet educational and also has the potential to advocate for an unbiased



view of the social class. In this ending of the chapter, a recently freed slave becomes the winner of collection; he proudly wears the robe given as the reward, with the Latin phrase "Ductus Arte Thermarum" written on it. This chapter is exemplary of Yamazaki's masterful skills in intertwining clever plots with insightful ideas and rich cultural references. The cover of each volume is a parody of famous ancient Greek and Roman sculptures, with Venus de Milo holding a shower towel and a dryer, Laocoön with a shampoo hat on his head, for example. This echoes with the style of the narrative, witty yet enlightening.

Classical, Mythological,
Traditional Motifs,
Characters, and
Concepts

[Antoninus Pius](#) [Hadrian](#) [Roman Empire](#) [Roman History](#) [Rome](#)

Other Motifs, Figures,
and Concepts Relevant
for Children and Youth
Culture

[History](#) [Humour](#) [Invention](#) [Love](#) [Relationships](#) [Society](#) [Water](#)

Further Reading

Lee, Sung-Ae, "Adaptations of Time Travel Narratives in Japanese Multimedia: Nurturing Eudaimonia across Time and Space", *International Research in Children's Literature* 7.2 (2014): 136-151

